

Ascension Lutheran Church

Pastor Godkin's Sermon for the week of March 21, 20 10

The Vineyard Belongs to the Lord (Luke 20:9-20)

Grace, mercy and peace to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen. The text for today's homily is from twentieth chapter of the Gospel according to St. Luke:

"¹³Then the owner of the vineyard said, 'What shall I do? I will send my beloved son; perhaps they will respect him.' ¹⁴But when the tenants saw him, they said to themselves, 'This is the heir. Let us kill him, so that the inheritance may be ours.' ¹⁵And they threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. What then will the owner of the vineyard do to them? ¹⁶He will come and destroy those tenants and give the vineyard to others." When they heard this, they said, "Surely not!" ¹⁷But he looked directly at them and said, "What then is this that is written:

"The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone'? Everyone who falls on that stone will be broken to pieces, and crush him."

This is the text.

Dear friends in our Saviour and Lord Jesus Christ, many things in my hand, and have lost them all; but hands that I still possess." In this day and age people want more stuff—bigger homes, better cars, larger lists go on. Not that we shouldn't own things but things come from. The true owner of everything, of

Martin Luther once said, "I have held whatever I have placed in God's hands. I have a lot of stuff. Most people have TVs, louder stereos, satellite TV and we must keep in mind where these things come from. The true owner of everything, of course, is God.

In our bulletin today there is a quote from the theologian named Paul Gerhardt. He said, "We are in this life as it were in another man's house. In heaven is our home, in this world for a day as though we were in a stranger's house." Sometimes we lose sight of where our ultimate loyalties ought to lie.

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In our text Jesus makes a point about ownership. He makes His point by using a parable. He often taught by parables as illustrations of salvation history. The vineyard in the parable represents God's people. The man who planted the vineyard is God and the tenants (the workers) who were supposed to harvest the fruit and give it back to the owner represent the priests, spiritual teachers

ns of spiritual truth. We have here a parable that represents God's people. The man who planted the vineyard is God and the tenants (the workers) who were supposed to harvest the fruit and give it back to the owner represent the priests, spiritual teachers

and pastors. And the servants who were sent to the vineyard by God to the people of Israel. And how did the tenants (workers) beat them and cast them out. If throughout history, they were mistreated by the people, the people did not like the prophets' message from even killed, even in horrible ways such as Isaiah,

vineyard represent the prophets. How do you think God will treat these servants? It says the prophets look back at the prophets. They were persecuted because of God. Some of the prophets were whom it is believed was sawed in two.

In the parable the owner then sends his own beloved son to respect him. "But when the workers saw the son they killed him. This son, of course, represents God the Father and the Pharisees and religious leaders of the day even crucifixion.

son and says, "Perhaps they will throw him out of the vineyard too." This son is Jesus Christ whom the Pharisees and religious leaders actually arranged to have killed by

Now why has there historically been such a violent reaction to God's Word, against the prophets who have preached God's Word and against Jesus Christ, the Word of God Incarnate Himself? The number one problem is that people want control and they have a great difficulty acknowledging that God is sovereign, that He is the Owner and there is no God but God and He is in control.

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People in general have troubles submitting to God because of a restless and sinful nature and it wants control. This is the original sin of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. The serpent tempted Eve to eat the forbidden fruit and she would be like God. Since then we have all inherited this skin desire to rely on ourselves instead of the One who

caused deep within each of us lies a desire for control. Adam and Eve wanted to be like God. They wanted to know the secret knowledge and they would be like God. Since then we have all inherited this skin desire to rely on ourselves instead of the One who supplies all things for us freely.

This inner desire for control and their spiritual pride is what led the Pharisees astray. They knew all the prophecies about the Messiah. They knew the Torah backwards and forwards and yet, when the true Messiah arrived they didn't recognize him. This is because Jesus did not fit into their neat little power structure they had created for themselves. And when Jesus challenged them they had to kill him. There is a saying that power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely. And when we are given a position of authority be it in our families, in the church, at work or elsewhere there is always the potential for abuse.

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I want us all to remember why I am here and why all of the leaders of the congregation are here. It is not because this is my church. This is God's field. My earnest desire is to be a shepherd to the people of God. I am not a shepherd, I am a worker in the field. The field, the vineyard, the church, it is God's church. If I have an effect that you will bear fruit and we would give that fruit

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The workers in the vineyard didn't want to give the fruit back to the owner. They wanted to keep it for themselves and make the vineyard their own. They forgot the purpose for which they exist.

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Now it's easy for us today to forget our purpose as the institution of our local parish and lose sight of the bigger picture—that God established Ascension Lutheran Church back in 1929 for the work of His ministry, to make disciples and bring lost souls to faith in Jesus Christ.

well. We can easily get focused on the bigger picture—that God established Ascension Lutheran Church back in 1929 for the work of His ministry, to make disciples and bring lost souls to faith in Jesus Christ.

The parable centres around the fruit in the vineyard. The express purpose of growing fruit and yet the workers did not want to give the fruit back to the owner. The fruit there is a symbol for church and in our local congregation here on Jarry Street. These fruits are good works, helping others in need; they are fruits of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. The fruits that God bears through His church are also people whom He brings to faith in Christ through the Word and Sacraments.

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The workers in the vineyard didn't give the fruits back to the owner. But this doesn't mean that all good things come from God and the good things in life are His gifts given by His grace. We can give back to God the things He has given us, meaning that our purpose is to use our time, our talents and abilities, and our treasures for His service. As we sing in the hymn, "We give Thee but Thine own, whatever the gift may be. All that we have is Thine alone, a trust O Lord from Thee." The Pharisees flaunted their show-off for their own prestige in the community. And this is a temptation for us as well. But our good Lord has called us to look beyond ourselves and to do all things for His glory and for our neighbour's good.

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And most of all we can give back to God thanks for the precious gift of faith and for His unsurpassed love that moved Jesus to go to the cross and atone for our sins. Thanks beto God for the resurrection of Christ so we too might rise to live with Him forever and finally be delivered from this corrupt dark fallen world and be brought into His celestial Kingdom of Light. As the hymn says #894 in the hymn al, "For the harvest of the Spirit, Thanks beto God. For the good we all inherit, Thanks beto God. For the wonder that Most of all, that love has found us, astound us, For the truth that still confound us, asses all understanding, keep Thanks beto God." Amen. The peace of God that surpasses all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.

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Soli Deo Gloria